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ABSTRACT

In 1997, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation launched an Initiative titled "Building Bridges between Practice and Knowledge in Nonprofit Management Education," which aimed to improve the practice of and build the knowledge base for nonprofit management education. This study was designed to examine dimensions of practitioner-academic partnerships as expressed in the key leadership teams of the Building Bridges projects. In the 19 U.S. projects, 71 people participate on project teams. Fifty-five of these team members responded to the study, with the bulk of the research conducted through extended telephone interviews. The analysis strategy was an ethnographic, extended case method. Findings show that the composition of the Bridges project leadership teams resulted from guidelines from the Kellogg Foundation and local circumstances. Teams were well-grounded in academic faculty membership in both tenured and adjunct positions. Teams also had a significant number of individuals who staff academic centers or programs that were focused on nonprofit management, volunteerism, and philanthropy. Many team members had experience in the field and identified themselves as practitioners, and many held academic degrees. More than two-thirds were employed as academics, but many had substantial teaching experience. The report identifies six conditions that facilitate successful teams: (1) team members perceive a good reason to work together; (2) team members are previously acquainted with one another; (3) teams are supported by formal structures; (4) team members respect each other and are willing to share authority and power; (5) practitioners and academics have experience in each other's domains; and (6) practitioners and academics bring complementary strengths to the endeavor. (Contains 33 references.) (SLD)

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VOICES OF WISDOM:
Knowledge and Experience from Practitioner-Academic Teams in the Building Bridges Initiative

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INTRODUCTION

The development of nonprofit management education in institutions of higher education has been "sudden and swift" according to Wish and Mirabella (1998). Wish's 1990 baseline study of universities and colleges offering graduate courses on nonprofit management found 17 universities offering a graduate concentration consisting of three or more courses. "As of March, 1997, seventy-six universities and colleges offered graduate degree programs with a concentration…in the management of nonprofit organizations" (Wish & Mirabella, 1998). The same body of research found 180 colleges and universities with courses in nonprofit management.

In part, these programs have proliferated because the nonprofit sector has had to respond to several changes occurring in the public and private sectors. In an era of corporate downsizing and government financial cutbacks, with a trend toward devolution of control and decision-making, the nonprofit sector is being called upon to deliver more programs and services, and to deliver them in more comprehensive, effective, and entrepreneurial ways (Corbin, 1999; Salamon, 1987).

Specific ramifications for nonprofit organizations and their leaders include compliance with complex and changing laws and regulations; serving a society which has undergone dramatic demographic shifts; maintaining revenue in an environment of increased competition in fund raising; and recruiting volunteers from a pool that continues to shrink and change (Heidrich, 1999).

Institutions of higher education themselves face several challenges in developing programs to prepare nonprofit leaders for this new environment. Challenges include recruiting students and faculty to a new field of study; competition for both internal "hard" funding and external "soft" funding; and developing a new field that is inherently interdisciplinary, but that also must create a distinct identity (O'Neill & Fletcher, 1998; Wish & Mirabella, 1998).

To develop nonprofit management education that is responsive to the needs of practice on the one hand, and that helps develop the theoretical and research bases of the field, on the other hand, the combined efforts of both nonprofit professionals and academics are needed. To this end, in 1997 the W.K.Kellogg Foundation launched a five-year $12.5 million Initiative titled *Building Bridges between Practice and Knowledge in Nonprofit Management Education*. The Initiative aimed to improve practice and build the

knowledge base for nonprofit management education by creating active two-way partnerships between the field of practice and higher education.

As a condition of being awarded a grant, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) required projects to identify and construct a project leadership team comprised of individuals representing key stakeholders. These leadership teams are a distinctive feature of the Building Bridges Initiative, and innovative in the field of grant making. In the customary model of foundation grants to institutions of higher education, projects are led by a principal investigator. In the Bridges Initiative, in contrast, initiative designers saw the teams as an effective way to achieve strong and relevant nonprofit management education programs. A primary premise was that achievement of quality educational programs in nonprofit management depends on the full engagement of practitioners and academics because knowledge is developed by, and resides in, both groups.

The Voices of Wisdom Study

Because project teams were a critically important component of the Initiative, we sought to learn about team structures and functioning. Thus, *voices* became a central theme of the study, with the concept of *voice* encompassing the experience, views, expertise, and other contributions that each member brings to teams. The study was designed to examine dimensions of practitioner-academic partnerships as they are expressed in the key leadership teams of the Bridges projects.

Three key questions guide this paper:

- What is the composition of teams?
- How are the teams structured?
- What conditions contribute to successful collaboration of team members?

The study offers insights for practitioners and academics working together to advance the field of nonprofit management.

Methods

We employed a purposeful sample in the study. In the 19 U.S. Bridges projects, a total of 71 individuals participate on the project leadership teams. The aim was to include all

individuals in the sample to ensure maximum variation. The response rate of individuals was 77.5 percent (55 of 71). All U.S. projects were represented; see Table 1. An additional eight Building Bridges programs operate in Latin American countries but were not included in the study because they operate in different contexts from the U.S. projects.

The bulk of the research was conducted through extended telephone interviews. With one exception, interviews were conducted with one respondent per interview. A semi-structured protocol of open-ended questions guided the interviews. Interviewees received a copy of the protocol in advance of the interview. Interview duration averaged one and one-half to two hours. Interviews were virtually evenly split between us. Camino conducted 28 interviews; Heidrich 27. Each of us conducted interviews with intact teams, so that each of us interviewed nine teams. One team we interviewed together face-to-face in order to pilot test questions. All 19 of the U.S. project teams are represented in this study.

The analysis strategy employed the ethnographic, extended case method (Burawoy, 1991; Yin, 1984). In essence, the method bolsters empirical data with the researchers' previous knowledge, as well as knowledge gleaned from other studies contained in the research record. We integrated two additional data sources into the analysis. One was project materials, including project executive summaries, annual reports, and project updates. The second was additional information based on other roles we play in the Initiative. Heidrich leads the intermediary organization that manages the Initiative, conducts project site visits, consults on a variety of project issues, and communicates with grantees on a regular basis. Camino conducts ethnographic documentation of annual, three-day networking meetings attended by all teams. Both serve on the Initiative team -- assembled by the WKKF Program Director for the purpose of supporting the Initiative and comprised of individuals representing WKKF, the intermediary, and the cluster evaluation organization. Thus, the analysis is based not solely on individuals' accounts. Conclusions are drawn from triangulating interview results, Initiative documentation, and participant observation.

TABLE 1:
BUILDING BRIDGES PROJECTS IN THE VOICES STUDY

U.S. Building Bridges Projects	Participated in Voices Interview
American Humanics	X
Arizona State University	X
California State University, Los Angeles	X
Case Western Reserve University	X
City University of New York	X
George Mason University	X
Georgetown University	X
Harvard University	X
Indiana University	X
Johns Hopkins University	X
Learning Institute for Nonprofit Organizations	X
Nonprofit Services Consortium, St. Louis	X
Northwestern University	X
Portland State University	X
State University of New York	X
University of Pennsylvania	X
University of Texas, San Antonio	X
Western Michigan University	X
Yale University	X

Study Limitations

All interviewees were assured of confidentiality of responses. We stated that we would report content, and would use quotations, but that these would be reported anonymously. Interviewees also were given the option of "no response" to questions they chose not to answer. No respondent declined to answer any of the questions.

However, it is possible that information imparted in the interviews was skewed because interviewees may have been concerned about the true extent of confidentiality, especially with regard to the funder. It is also possible that, due to the funding relationship, respondents may have answered questions the way they thought would be acceptable to the funder. While it is impossible to know the extent to which responses were slanted, the

ethnographic research design, sampling strategy, and triangulated data sources were intended to minimize such reactivity. We also found that, on the whole, interviewees approached the study with enthusiasm. Many expressed gratitude that their experiences and views were being recorded.

A Note on Terminology

As exemplified in the literature, *collaboration* is a term with a spectrum of references. Collaboration is a relationship that may occur on various levels; for example, individuals, organizations, institutions or communities (Todd, Ebata, & Hughes, 1998). It may be formal or informal (Macduff & Netting, 2000). In addition, intensity of the work and resource sharing fall along a spectrum (Feeney, 2000). In this paper, the collaboration we refer to principally involves individuals working together on the project leadership teams.

We also refer to *practitioners* and *academics* on the teams. In our usage, a practitioner is an individual who is employed by a nonprofit organization or who represents the voice of practice on the Bridges team – usually by virtue of an employment background in the nonprofit sector. We use the term *academic* rather than the more traditional *academician* to mean a person employed by, or affiliated primarily with, an academic department, center, program located in an institution of higher education. Even more specifically, we use *academic* to refer to an individual whose university responsibilities are primarily teaching, research, or academic program leadership.

Team Composition

For as much as the terms practitioner and academic have utility in describing team membership, they fall short of describing the variety of positions held by team members or their backgrounds in nonprofit practice and teaching. Individuals in this study embodied complexities in blending of practitioner and academic experience, viewpoint, voice, and role.

Because a central goal of the Bridges Initiative was to develop nonprofit management education programs that are responsive to the concerns of practice, while also grounded in academic theory and research, teams were encouraged to include individuals who could bring each type of experience and expertise to their teams. Indeed, the Building Bridges Initiative purpose to "...support efforts that create active two-way partnerships to

improve practice and build knowledge for nonprofit management" dictated, to a large extent, the practitioner-academic composition of the project leadership teams. Scholarly literature on the topic of practice-academic partnerships of various types underscores that a core challenge is to make the different types of knowledge operating in practice and academic spheres into shared goals for shared action (Hess & Mullen, 1995; Schon, 1983).

Another goal of the Initiative was to tie the nonprofit management programs more securely to their institutions, and to link the programs to communities. Accordingly, project directors were encouraged to consider the composition of the project team carefully. WKKF guidelines called for teams to be "representative of the key stakeholders involved in the project" – people who could champion the program in the university and community setting such as nonprofit practitioners, higher education administrators, faculty or instructors, and program participants or alumni.

At the beginning of the Initiative, it was necessary to use labels such as practitioner and academic to guide team composition; otherwise the teams would not have represented the diverse points of view required for building bridges. As will be discussed in this paper, Bridges team members overlap these categories to some extent. The ambiguity surrounding roles of practitioner and academic in the Initiative is indicative, perhaps, of the ways that sharp distinctions between scholarship and practice are beginning to soften, and professionals in each domain are beginning to cross boundaries (Boyer, 1990).

FINDINGS: COMPOSITION AND STRUCTURE OF TEAMS

Table 2, below, summarizes the affiliations and employment positions of team members. The majority of individuals on teams are located in a university. Twenty-nine (57.7 percent) carry a job title categorized as professor, either tenured or tenure track, or adjunct or lecturer positions. A significant number (23 or 41.8 percent) are employed at academic centers or programs. Most of these centers and programs are focused on nonprofit management, volunteerism, and philanthropy. Six (10.9 percent) individuals also have an affiliation as either a fellow, research scholar, or practitioner-in-residence. Two (3.6 percent) are deans.

As the university portion of the table makes evident, a common feature of university affiliation and employment is holding more than one job title. For example, a few tenured

professors also serve as adjuncts teaching in other programs; two are also deans. Several professors also serve as center or program directors. A few of the fellows and research scholars are also adjunct professors.
Nearly one-third (17 or 30.9 percent) of individuals on teams are employed at organizations we have termed *external*. The bulk of these organizations are nonprofit. Half of this group are chief executive or financial officers; half are program managers or administrators.

In contrast to university personnel, team members located at these external organizations did not identify multiple job titles. However, two who were chief executive officers when they began service on project teams have recently retired and are currently affiliated with a university.

TABLE 2:
AFFILIATION AND EMPLOYMENT POSITION OF TEAM MEMBERS
N=55 Individuals representing 19 teams

DOMAINS OF, AND TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT AND AFFILIATION			FREQUENCY	
			INDIVIDUALS	PERCENTAGE
University	Professor	Tenure or Tenure Track*✓	17	30.9
		Adjunct or Lecturer*	12	21.8
	Center/Program Personnel*		23	41.8
	Other (Fellows, Research Scholars, Practitioners in Residence)*		6	10.9
	Deans ✓		2	3.6
TOTAL UNIVERSITY			60*	109*
External Organizations	Chief Executive or Financial Officers +		9	16.4
	Program Managers or Administrators		8	14.5
TOTAL EXTERNAL ORGANIZATIONS			17	30.9

* ✓Some individuals occupy more than one category
+ Two are recently retired, and are currently affiliated with a university, one as a fellow, one as a practitioner in residence.

Ways Team Members Became Involved

Table 3, below, shows the ways that individuals became involved on teams. Slightly more than one quarter (15 or 27.3 percent) wrote the grant proposal that funded the project. The vast majority of this group are professors. In addition to those who wrote the proposal, nearly three quarters of team members became involved as a result of a previous working relationship with at least one other team member. Examples of such relationships are employment as center staff or adjunct faculty, or affiliation as a fellow or student.

Only five individuals were referred to their teammates by an outside party. Only four responded to an advertisement for employment on the project; they were subsequently also selected for team membership. Friendship was the least common method of involvement; a scant two individuals reported it.

TABLE 3: WAYS TEAM MEMBERS BECAME INVOLVED
N= 55 Individuals representing 19 Teams

METHOD	FREQUENCY	
	INDIVIDUALS	PERCENTAGE
Wrote Proposal*	15	27.3
Working Relationship with at Least One Other Team Member*	40	72.7
Referred by Outside Party	5	9.1
Responded to Advertisement for Job	4	7.3
Friendship*	2	3.6
TOTAL	66*	120.0*

* Some individuals are represented in more than one category.
Note: Persons responsible for writing the proposal on six teams ultimately did not become members of project leadership teams, or early in the Initiative they rotated off of teams. Thus, they were not interviewed for this study.

Ways Team Members are Linked in Teams

We also inquired about the types of linkages that tied together individuals on teams, once teams were formed. Table 4, below, demonstrates that the vast majority of teammates are linked through formal agreement. There are two types of formal agreement: (a) same employer, and (b) different employer. Thirty-seven (67.3 percent) are employed at the university that houses the grant, typically as faculty or as staff of academic centers and programs. Contracts, memoranda of understanding, and letters of agreement constitute the second commonest means by which many team members are formally linked. Slightly more than one-fifth of individuals are linked to teams in this way.

Six individuals are linked to their teams informally. These were described as "handshake" or "verbal" agreements.

TABLE 4: WAYS TEAM MEMBERS ARE LINKED IN TEAMS
N=55 Individuals representing 19 Teams

TYPE OF LINKAGE		FREQUENCY	
		INDIVIDUALS	PERCENTAGE
Formal Agreement	Same Employer (University)	37	67.3
	Different Employer (Contracts, Memoranda of Understanding, or Letters of Agreement)	12	21.8
Informal Agreement		6	10.9
TOTAL		55	100.0

Nearly everyone with non-university employers, and linked to their teams through formal agreements, indicated the utility of the arrangement. For example, these types of agreements were described as "professionalizing the relationship," clearly stipulating roles and goals, and serving as tangible evidence for supervisors and board members to inform them of the team members' activities and responsibilities.

However, in one instance, an individual linked by contract and receiving a stipend, thought it prevented more frequent contact with the team. The individual's perception

was that the arrangement consequently precluded opportunity to develop a deeper relationship with teammates.

Most of those employed by external organizations and linked to their teams informally described the arrangement as working without difficulty. One noted, however, tensions with a new supervisor who did not seem to understand the project, the project team concept, and the value that involvement could bring to the organization.

Summary

The composition of Bridges project leadership teams resulted from a combination of guidelines from the WKKF and application of those guidelines to local circumstances. Within the WKKF guidelines, there was flexibility to recruit individuals representing several constituencies -- specifically, nonprofit practitioners, higher education administrators, faculty or instructors, and program participants or alumni.

Teams are well grounded in academic faculty membership, both in tenured and adjunct positions. Teams also have a significant number of individuals who staff academic centers or programs, most of which are focused on nonprofit management, volunteerism, and philanthropy. In many cases, center and program directors hold faculty positions as well.

Teams are heavily populated with individuals who have experience as, and identify themselves as, practitioners, even though the university employs them. Although we did not inquire directly about academic credentials, many of these individuals mentioned that they hold advanced academic degrees. Less frequently, teams include individuals employed outside the university in nonprofit organizations.

The profile of project team members that emerges if one considers current place of employment as the only variable – i.e. those employed by universities are academics and those employed by nonprofit or business organizations are practitioners – indicates that over two-thirds (67.3 percent) are academics. This place-of-employment variable, however, masks complexities in the experiences of team members. As will be discussed later in this paper, many academics have substantial nonprofit management experience and many practitioners have substantial teaching experience.

Most team members also possess previous experience in working with one another in some capacity, typically by virtue of employment or affiliation with the same university or external organization. Few teammates were unacquainted with one another when teams were formed.

These data bear implications for conditions that facilitate successful teams, which is the topic of the next section.

FINDINGS: CONDITIONS THAT FACILITATE SUCCESSFUL TEAMS

Throughout the interviews, we noted that interviewees discussed interactions among their teams in an enthusiastic manner. Analysis of data revealed that what interviewees discussed as team success does not occur naturally; it is the result of several contextual conditions. These conditions are those structures and processes that allow individuals to become a part of a team, to exert influence on the work the team carries out, and to help the team develop and evolve.

Our analysis identified the following six conditions: (1) team members perceive a good reason to work together, (2) team members are previously acquainted with one another, (3) teams are supported by formal structures, (4) team members respect each other and are willing to share authority and power, (5) practitioners and academics have previous experience in each other's domains, and (6) practitioners and academics bring complementary strengths to the endeavor. These are discussed below.

CONDITION 1: TEAM MEMBERS PERCEIVE A GOOD REASON TO WORK TOGETHER

Any type of collaborative effort has little likelihood of succeeding if participating parties perceive their work to be merely symbolic or tokenistic in nature (Hess & Mullen, 1995; Todd, Ebata & Hughes, 1998). Rather, the literature discusses the fundamental importance of: (1) the nature of the work being clearly goal-oriented, and (2) the issues being legitimate and having meaningful consequences oriented toward change. Indeed, it is the component of change that appears to represent the force driving effective interdisciplinary, interprofessional teams or other collaborative entities (Goodman, Steckler, & Kegler, 1997; Warren, 1975).

Many people in our interviews commented that a unique aspect of the project leadership team was that it was implemented for achievement of concrete goals, not solely for advisory purposes. For example, a faculty member on one team spoke at length about the focus on outcomes and impact that the team needed to address in order to carry out the project: "Thinking in terms of impact and utility has been both a cause and consequence of our work." A faculty member on another team referenced the action-orientation of the team, and contrasted it to other teams involving practitioners and academics that she had worked on:

> It works as a body of shared ownership. Members are more than just commentators. The glue here is shared vision of our mission and goals. The project is owned by members of the team. They CARE about the outcomes.

Another faculty member said that having a team led to a more ambitious goal than had existed prior to the BBI grant:

> The benefit [of having a team] is that we all share the same goal: putting the center on a permanent basis – to leave a legacy. Our goal [to raise $5 million in endowment] is a direct result of the team structure.

Finally, a community leader whose involvement with the academic center is entirely a volunteer effort said:

> The meaningful work is worth it. At the end of the day, we know we are doing something that has a positive impact on our community. I feel very blessed that I've had the opportunity to be involved in this project at this point in time.

CONDITION 2:
TEAM MEMBERS ARE PREVIOUSLY ACQUAINTED WITH ONE ANOTHER

Interpersonal trust has been demonstrated to confer benefits in terms of productivity and other types of workplace effectiveness by several researchers (Fukuyama, 1995; Johnston & Lawrence, 1998). Moreover, trust contributes to aspects of efficiency that make possible favorable contexts that allow for effectiveness. A foundation of trust decreases the amount of time individuals need to feel confident in working together, decreases the

necessity to formulate formal contracts, and may even allow for greater creativity because people are more willing to take risks (Alter & Hage, 1993; Light, 1999). Indeed, it is virtually a cross-cultural social science precept that when distrust is present, individuals and groups become preoccupied with creating and reinforcing boundaries intended to maintain social distance (Barth, 1969).

While many dimensions make up the construct of trust, familiarity is a major one. Familiarity reduces uncertainty. As specified above in Table 3, the vast majority of individuals on teams were previously acquainted with at least one other team member, primarily through some sort of working relationship. Excerpts from several interviews bring home the point:

> We enjoy longtime relationships. I wouldn't have done this if I didn't trust them [team members]. We are probably more alike than different. I am not intimidated [by academics]; I can hold my own. I feel appreciated and listened to.
>
> We've all known each other for over ten years. It wasn't like we had to build new relationships. We have learned to value one another's judgments – different preferences, different opinions, and different directions. But all ideas are honored.
>
> There is a high level of trust [on our team]. There are years of relationships among us. We have mutual respect for the competence on the team. Gender, seniority, et cetera, are NOT factors on our team.

The value of interpersonal familiarity among team members is underscored by additional data from this study. An interview question inquired specifically about the level of trust operating among team members. By and large, the majority indicated that the degree and quality of trust on their team was high. It is critical to note that, when speaking with specific reference to their teams, interviewees' descriptions did not contain elements of stereotyping and practitioner-academic wariness of one another discussed elsewhere (see for example, Feeney, 2000). However, when speaking of practitioners and academics as categorical groups, descriptions did contain negative perceptions and were reflective of stereotypes. Similar behaviors have been documented to occur among individuals describing race, gender, and class relations (Gaertner et al., 1996).

We are not oblivious to the practical considerations of constructing project teams of individuals already familiar and experienced with one another. The exigencies of implementing grant-funded projects, which must operate within specified time frames, frequently require implementers to construct structures and processes rapidly. In this regard, recruiting individuals who were already known, and who came with work performance "track records" likely expedited the launching of projects.

CONDITION 3:
TEAMS ARE SUPPORTED BY FORMAL STRUCTURES

For as much as successful collaborative endeavors are based on commonalities in values, vision of the future, or consensus on criteria for successful solutions to problems, various structures of support also figure significantly into the equation. Structures help organize people and the work (Senge, 1990; Winer & Ray, 1994). Indeed, the social science record knows of no society or group in which cooperative ventures do not require some type of structure. The challenge lies in creating an organizing structure that promotes attainment of goals or purposes without hindering implementation processes.

Among Bridges teams, common place of employment provided a primary means of such support. Over two-thirds (67.3 percent) of team members are employed by the university, most frequently within a specific center or program that implements the project. We did not ask specifically about the benefits of common employment because this finding was unexpected by us. It was not until we had collected all the data and initiated full-scale analysis that we realized the prevalence of the practice. Nonetheless, comments made by interviewees across various questions provide evidence of the ways that a common place of employment supports team processes.

First, common employment provides immediate orientation to a common mission. When individuals come together from different groups, or different organizations, even if it is for a common *project* mission, they often must reconcile the project mission with that of their group or organization (see for example, articles in Hess & Mullen 1995 and Lerner & Simon, 1998).

Second, common employment at these centers or programs often entails occupying adjacent or closely placed office space. Spatial proximity itself enhances opportunities for impromptu or ad-hoc meetings, "water-cooler" dialogue, and other vehicles of communication and sharing. Typical responses to our queries about team meetings and

communication patterns were "We meet as needed;" "[we have] frequent interactions;" "daily conversations;" "We don't have regular scheduled meetings. Our offices are next to each other and [other team member] is one floor below us;" "The three of us meet all the time;" "We are in frequent communication;" "[Other team member] and I interact daily;" "We have very regular communication: email, phone, in-office time;" "Around the office and lots of email;" "Informal -- hallway conversations and email."

Finally, common employment can also contribute to clearly defined roles and lines of authority. Jobs tend to embody certain divisions of labor, and people carry specified and jointly acknowledged responsibilities and tasks. Even if specific roles and responsibilities change somewhat as dictated by the work, common understanding tends to prevail. Accordingly, individuals in common workplaces may not always have to explain their jobs to co-workers. In fact, a question on our initial interview instrument inquired about the role(s) individuals are playing on teams. During the early stages of piloting and refinement, the question tended to puzzle respondents. Their inclination was to answer in terms of roles associated with their jobs, not the teams, because many teammates had common place of employment.

CONDITION 4:
TEAM MEMBERS RESPECT EACH OTHER AND ARE WILLING TO SHARE AUTHORITY AND POWER

In the literature on collaboration, respect and the sharing of authority and power are often conceptually and practically linked to trust and communication. For example, several authors in the area of school reform assert the importance of including individuals with power and status in collaborative endeavors because they have the institutional power to help bring reform and change about. However, it is critical that *within* the collaborating groups or teams that such representatives do not exercise power over their colleagues (Kadel & Routh, 1994; Melaville & Blank, 1991). Doing so constitutes a major barrier (see for example articles in Hess & Mullen, 1995).

In their review of literature, MacDuff and Netting (2000) discuss various models that fall into two general categories: hierarchical and dialogic. Their review (p. 51) illustrates that hierarchical models have dominated collaborations between academics and practitioners. Hierarchical models are based on specific goals and highly defined roles for individuals. Dialogic models, on the other hand, are more fluid and flexible, and stress the interpersonal aspects of relationships, including mutual respect among members.

An unexpected and important finding of the study was that nearly all team members feel their voices are valued and respected on their teams. The finding was unexpected because of a focus in much of the literature on the dominant hierarchical model of practitioner-academic collaboration discussed above. In addition, there were tensions evident in some practitioner-academic interactions at the Building Bridges annual networking meetings.

Almost unanimously, respondents in this study reported a high degree of satisfaction with the value and respect practitioners and academics accord to each other on project teams. Factors that respondents said contribute to the high degree of respect include willingness to disagree openly, regard for each other as equals, recognition of each person's distinct competency, high value placed on diversity, previous (sometimes longstanding) relationships, and personal likeability. The typical interview, for instance, included responses such as these:

> We have a high degree of understanding and respect and value [on the team]. We frequently disagree. But we NEED differing views and people who see things differently. There is a high degree of trust among the three of us. We have deferred to each other on various things. We're fond of each other.

> There is absolute parity of voices on the team. It's a really strong team. There is no weak link. We chose leaders of the community to begin with, and then worked with them as a community of equals. Each individual has an area of expertise which they can claim. This creates parity. Everyone has the same level of position and authority. [The practitioners on our team] have positional authority and stature within the community. They are well educated and not intimidated by the university.

Although almost all respondents reported that they felt their own voices were valued and respected on their team, a few individuals reported that their teammates' voices did not carry equal weight. The data revealed three types of situations in which voices were considered unequal. The first situation was created by distance between team members' offices. In some projects where practitioner team members' offices were off campus, there were reports that those team members did not have equal opportunity to influence the project simply because it was more difficult for them to attend meetings or be closely involved. For instance, one such respondent said, "...each voice is valued equally...but we don't all have the opportunity to have equal impact."

The second situation was created by differences in team member commitment to the project. In the one case where commitment was an issue, all team members were located on campus, but the project director pointed out that it is hard to value the voice of team members who do not share the work:

> People who don't come to meetings don't have much voice. [Two team members] suggest a lot of things *we* could do, but they don't follow through or do any of the work...Voice doesn't matter if you don't do anything.

The third situation where voices were reported to have unequal power or legitimacy was created by the personality and work-style of the project director. Program managers on one team, both employed by the academic center, reported:

> Our voices are valued. But probably not equally because of the personality of the project director. He wants our input, but he makes the decisions. He is not a team player.

In addition, while most respondents reported feeling their voices were valued and respected on their teams, four individuals identified two entrenched features in the general academic culture that made them feel devalued. One feature is the issue of advanced academic degrees and the other pertains to hierarchical staffing structures.

Three respondents discussed a lack of respect they felt because they (or others) did not hold advanced academic degrees. Examples include these comments:

> Gender not an issue. Graduate degrees ARE an issue here [at this university].

> In my experience [at this university], I don't feel aware of issues of race or gender. But there is degree elitism, and that WAY affects how you are heard...

Further, due to institutional structure, not the Building Bridges team, two of these four respondents spoke at length of the psychological price they pay in their positions as university staff rather than faculty. Both were acutely aware that, even though they hold advanced academic degrees, their voices are not valued and respected within the university arena on an equal basis with faculty voices.

> I am staff. I have a Ph.D.... I enjoy respect and my voice is heard [on my team] but I don't have weight in academic matters. I am keenly sensitive to the faculty/staff divide. In the [center] operation I have respect, but I work in service of faculty. They are the hothouse flowers and I water them. My earned degree is irrelevant. There are hierarchical differences. The faculty own the university.
>
> There is an upstairs-downstairs culture. Faculty consider themselves elite. The [program managers] are downstairs. I take it for what it is, but it can be psychologically expensive.

CONDITION 5:
PRACTITIONERS AND ACADEMICS HAVE SIMILAR PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE IN EACH OTHER'S DOMAINS

Classic social science and social psychological theory postulate a strong relationship between taking on the perspective or role of the other, and the acquisition of competence in social interactions (Mead, 1934; Feffer, 1970). The theory holds that not only will sensitivity and understanding be heightened as a result, but also that through new experiences, individuals are primed to open their perspectives and deepen motivations to become agents of change, and to work for social justice. Application of the theory has been widespread. Training and experience in enacting the role of the other and in taking multiple perspectives has become a mainstay of organizational and community development. Examples include changing attitudes and behaviors of racism and other forms of prejudice (Batts, 1998), as well as improving a sense of belonging and attachment to organizational, institutional, or community settings (Camino, 1994; Gaertner et al., 1996).

Midway through the data collection phase of this study, we made a few adjustments to the interview protocol. A set of questions introduced at this point inquired about paid and volunteer experience that respondents had with nonprofit organizations, and experiences in teaching for-credit university-based courses or in seminars geared toward professional development of nonprofit leaders. These questions were posed to 22 practitioners and 17 academics.

The results revealed several areas of similarity between academics' and practitioners' experiences. A little over half of practitioners (54.5 percent) had taught university courses bearing academic credit. Nearly all of the academic respondents (88.2 percent) had experience as a paid staff member in a nonprofit organization. A similar percentage of both practitioners (54.5 percent) and academics (58.8 percent) reported experience as a volunteer in a nonprofit organization. Almost all reported they had garnered these experiences over the course of at least ten years, and previous to the Bridges Initiative. Further, ten of the seventeen academics, who are also directors of academic centers and programs, described how managing them closely resembled the processes of managing a nonprofit organization. As one put it:

> Running this center is a lot like running a nonprofit. You have to raise funds, coordinate a board, manage volunteers, manage grants and contracts, train staff, and have all the legalities worked out.

Evidence reported here illuminates why Bridges participants are not easy to classify along tidy lines of practitioner or academic. There is substantial overlap and complexity in the perspectives and experiences of most team members.

CONDITION 6: PRACTITIONERS AND ACADEMICS BRING COMPLEMENTARY STRENGTHS TO THE ENDEAVOR

The effectiveness of any collaborative effort is never a function of one person. Collaborative effectiveness is a collective concept. Effectiveness arises from the interplay and synergy among collaborating parties. Much of the interplay and synergy, however, depends on complementary differences.

Although there were reports of similarities in experiences as described above for Condition 4, there was also agreement that practitioners and academics make distinct contributions to teams. The unique contributions of practitioners included (1) grounding in reality, (2) links to other practitioners and nonprofit organizations, and (3) creativity.

Grounding in reality. For as much as many academics have had experience working as a paid staff member in a nonprofit organization, respondents emphasized that team members representing the voice of practice have an edge because they have current or recent experience. Such experience includes first-hand knowledge of how nonprofit

organizations operate, insights into needs for staff training, and insights into the day-to-day responsibilities of nonprofit leaders in the context of rapid private and public sector change.

In addition, because many of the Bridges projects are developing continuing education programs for nonprofit professionals, practitioners on teams offer insights into how curricula can best be shaped for classroom participants, and which methods of delivery will prove effective. One academic stated, for example:

> Without practitioners, we would have had a shallower concept of what the center could be. It would have been more focused on research – much narrower. With practitioners we gained a broader notion of what the university could do to strengthen nonprofit practice

Links to other practitioners and nonprofit organizations. Several team members reported that practitioners provide connections and access to "target audiences." While many academic team members also have connections to nonprofit personnel and organizations, respondents still considered that links from practitioners are often deeper or carry more credibility. Two respondents, for example, had this to say:

> We would not have had legitimacy, authority, and credibility in the community [without the practitioner on our team].

> I bring knowledge of the broad and complex nonprofit community that the representatives from the university do not have… I have knowledge of the sub-sectors and individuals who could speak for their sub-sector. Also knowledge of issues, such as funding.

Creativity. The view of practitioners is that they are less inhibited to challenge prevailing university and academic culture. Many respondents felt that practitioners have fewer constraints than their academic colleagues simply because they are not employed on a permanent basis by academic institutions. One practitioner and one academic observed:

> We [team] would not have been as creative. Academics tend to do the same thing over and over. It's hard to get them to change, expand, be innovative.

> Having practitioners on the team helps faculty see outside the box.

Both practitioners and academics referenced unique contributions made by academics. These include (1) institutional and academic legitimacy, (2) access to university resources, and (3) intellectual rigor.

Institutional and academic legitimacy. Academics, by virtue of their careers and employment at universities, have experience in teaching and research on nonprofit issues. Not surprisingly, this experience was seen as critical to the development of academically legitimate and credible nonprofit educational programs. One academic and one practitioner, for instance, emphasized:

> [One of our faulty members] has played a useful role in reminding team practitioners that this is still an academic institution. We could have become marginalized if we had become viewed as the vocational school. We can't just ignore the reality of working within a category-one research institution.

> Academics bring research at a higher level. It's more abstract and more extensive. They know the writing on the field, what people are teaching, resources on current books, and texts being used.

Intellectual rigor. According to most respondents, it is the job of academics to bring research- and theory-based knowledge to curriculum content and program development. The terms, "rigor," "intellectual," "intense," "meticulous," and "depth" were contained in the responses of both academics and practitioners. Practitioners, whether due to experience, training, employment, or time constraints were viewed as unable to make this contribution to the same extent as academics. A practitioner and two academics stated:

> [Without academics] there would have been continuing education and training. The value of research would not have been respected. Part of it is the dynamic: practitioners might not know what they need to know more about. When they see how research can influence decision-making, they become alerted to its value.

> As the academic on the team, I am the proxy for the body of knowledge issues. I bring that to the team. To position ourselves in the academic world -- I'm the voice for that. There is a lot of academic conversation that wouldn't happen without me – attention to evaluation, outcomes, et cetera.

> There wouldn't have been rigor of thought [without the academics]. We wouldn't have been as strategic.

Access to university resources. Several respondents noted that universities are some of the most resource-rich institutions within their surrounding communities. Resources include convening space, classroom space, bookstores, ability to apply for and administer many types of grant monies, time to develop course materials, and time to spend with students outside of the classroom. In addition, a few practitioners averred that because universities have many faculty and staff, they are able to cover representation at community meetings to a degree that smaller nonprofits are not.

Overall, most respondents recognized the complementary contributions made by their practitioner or academic teammates. One respondent summed it up as follows:

> Without both academicians and practitioners the project would go nowhere. There is a tremendous lack of understanding between the two groups. Bridging them together on a team is at least a beginning. Practitioners think, 'Universities have lots of money. Why don't they help us?' Academicians think, 'Nonprofits have so little sophistication that we have nothing to offer them.' ? We've gained a new level of understanding of what challenges we both face and the environment we operate in.

There are two additional observations of note in these data. First, is an apparent contradiction between Condition 5 (team members have similar previous experience in each other's domains) and Condition 6 (practitioners and academics bring complementary strengths to the endeavor). As noted in discussion of Condition 5, more than half of practitioners we asked indicated they had taught for-credit academic courses, and nearly all the academics we asked stated they had worked as a paid employee of a nonprofit organization.

It appears that the apparent contradiction may be reconciled, at least in part, by considerations of temporality and the demands of current employment. Although many individuals had "cross-over" experiences in the past, they now have certain current job responsibilities that are more firmly rooted in one domain than the other. And, although many currently wear "multiple hats" for their jobs, they appear to identify more solidly with one domain or the other. At the beginning of interviews, we asked respondents how they identified with general descriptors of "faculty," "practitioner," or "administrator."

Most easily and clearly placed themselves into one of the categories as either a sole or primary identification.

The second observation is that among the strengths reported to be contributed by practitioners and academics, each set of response categories contains one feature that reflects common stereotypes of practitioner and academic work. These are that practitioners bring creativity, while academics bring intellectual rigor – stereotypes that represent traditionally held and ingrained views about the division of labor between practitioners and academics (Shon, 1983). At the same time, these data appear to support the work of several authors who emphasize that practitioners and academics work in very different environments that accent and reward dissimilar types of behavior (Kessels & Korthagen, 1996; Small & Bogenschneider, 1998).

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In 1997 at the outset of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation Building Bridges between Practice and Knowledge in Nonprofit Management Education Initiative, practitioner-academic project leadership teams were conceptualized as a way to encourage a two-way flow of learning and teaching about nonprofit management and leadership. It was also expected that teams would implement, manage, and evaluate the grant projects. Guidelines for team composition were set forth by WKKF to ensure that each project was led by cross-professional teams, composed of members committed to the project for the duration of the grant period. The guidelines called for three-member project teams composed of a project director and two other key leaders representing Third Sector practitioners, higher education administrators, faculty or teachers, and/or program participants or alumni.

This paper has discussed a variety of ways that the concept of practitioner-academic leadership teams played out on-the-ground. Especially salient is that the teams served as bridges themselves to link knowledge and wisdom from both practice and academic domains. There is much to be learned from these teams. The results of this study will prove useful to future endeavors to develop the theory and practice of practitioner-academic collaboration.

Our analysis revealed team composition to be far more complex than the envisioned three-member team representing distinct stakeholder groups. Team composition was a critically important decision – a decision made differently by each project director in the

Initiative. In this regard, each team was unique. At the same time, however, there were several commonalities that prove instructive.

Even though most respondents clearly identified themselves with one type of stakeholder voice, each individual often embodied multiple perspectives. For example, many academics hold two titles, making it difficult to sort them into clear "faculty" or "administrator" categories. Many team members who represent the practitioner voice are employed by an academic institution. On the surface, they thus represent the academy more than the nonprofit community. Yet, we found that in most cases, these individuals also spoke with the voice of practice on account of prior experience in that arena. Similarly, many faculty or center directors have substantial experience as nonprofit practitioners, thus being positioned to understand the constraints and assets of both worlds.

Data analysis presented in this paper also illuminates six conditions that facilitate success in practitioner-academic teams. These conditions are grounded in the experience of all 19 U.S. Bridges teams. They implicate several elements of best practice, and they encourage future inquiry and testing. We summarize them and discuss implications for practice and future research below.

Team Members Perceive a Good Reason to Work Together

Interviews in this study yielded stories of how Building Bridges projects were enhanced by team synergy. In cases where team members saw a purposeful reason to work together, they spoke with passion about their achievements in the project. Many respondents emphasized that such achievement-oriented action made the Bridges teams different from advisory committees and task forces they had been part of previously.

This condition suggests that convening practitioners and academics and soliciting opinions and advice is not enough to sustain commitment and interaction over the long-term. In contrast, having concrete, purposeful action appears to be a type of glue powerful enough to cement people together for long periods. Goal-directed work for teams forces thinking and commitment that is collectively, not individually, oriented. Such collective concerns may override the differences in practitioner and academic cultures that have been discussed as producing barriers to sustained collaboration (Feeney, 2000; Hess & Mullen, 1995).

Team Members are Previously Acquainted with One Another

Relationships are a critical feature of teams, and building relationships takes time. We found that most team members had a relationship that pre-dated the Bridges Initiative Team. These relationships appeared to enable teams to coalesce quickly to do the work of the Building Bridges grant. This finding suggests that constituting teams of members already known to one another is an effective technique for work involving grant-funded projects, which tend to be time limited, and therefore required to demonstrate results and outcomes relatively quickly. It remains to be studied if the condition proves effective with teams that are afforded time to implement projects at a slower pace.

Teams are Supported by Formal Structures

The presence of a formal structure within which the grant project was being implemented contributed to team efficacy. Nearly 70 percent of team members were employed by the university, usually within the center or program operating the grant project. As we have discussed, common place of employment can provide a common mission, facilitate communication, and contribute to defined roles. In most cases where team members did not share place of employment, there were usually other structures that held members together; specifically, a contract, mutual organization, or statement of understanding.

Without such underpinning structures, the energy and resources of teams tends to dissipate. Structures appear to facilitate collaborative work simply by providing the scaffolding necessary to uphold a project thereby making it possible for teams to engage in process. Process without structure can devolve quickly into chaos. Building structures requires time, however. Again, a lesson from Building Bridges teams is that use of existing structures appears to expedite action.

Team Members Respect Each Other and are Willing to Share Authority and Power

An unexpected and important finding of this study was that nearly all team members feel their voices are valued and respected on their teams. The finding was unexpected because of a focus in much of the literature on the dominant hierarchical model of practitioner-academic collaboration. To be sure, respondents in this study discussed the issue primarily within the interpersonal context of relationships with teammates. As such, this condition appears to be related to the condition of previous acquaintance with one

another. Our hypothesis is that there is likely a dynamic interaction among previous relationships, trust, respect, and the confidence to express one's self and challenge teammates forthrightly.

However, we did not examine how these factors play out against structural issues of employment that often embed hierarchies. For example, employment as adjunct faculty or as staff in an academic center is frequently impermanent and unstable. Examination of the tensions between an in-group identification of practitioners and academics as teammates, and out-group types of hierarchical relationships as employer and employee would provide fruitful insights into the complexities of formally organizing practitioner-academic teams.

Team Members have Previous Experience in Each Other's Domains

Much has been written about features inherent in institutions of higher education that present barriers to collaboration. These include academic training focused on a "rugged individualism" in research and teaching; the tenure and promotion reward systems for faculty; and departmental structures oriented to operate largely as autonomous, not collaborating, units. Nonprofit organizations also face several barriers. These include dependence on philanthropic and/or government funding; emphasis on experiential, rather than academic, knowledge; and lack of reward for involvement in academic pursuits.

Our findings undergirding this condition suggest that practitioner-academic team cohesion is based to some extent on common professional experience. Perhaps more importantly, findings also appear to point to the importance of common experience when team members engage in innovative work that is at the boundaries of their professions. Currently, nonprofit management education lies on the frontiers between practice and academe, departments within higher education, and the changing relationships between government, business, and nonprofit sectors. Innovation tends to be generated along such uncharted borderlands–the "betwixt and between" spaces of intellectual inquiry and practical wisdom.

In a very real sense, practitioners and academics on Building Bridges teams may be regarded as unique to their professions. They have ventured into each other's domains, and by virtue of the experience, it may be postulated that they have brought their insights to bear on achieving a new level of relevance in nonprofit management education programs. Not only do these findings suggest that future builders of practitioner-academic

teams include members whose previous experience crosses multiple domains. They also implicate opportunities for research on individuals with such experience and the salient contributions they make to forging the new field of nonprofit management education.

Practitioner and Academic Team Members bring Complementary Strengths to the Endeavor

For as much as some overlap in experience contributed to team cohesion, practitioners and academics brought vital differences to the table. These differences were necessary in order to bring a distinctive blend of content and strategies to the development of education programs. Interviews in this study included stories of how the Building Bridges projects benefited from each team member's unique perspectives and experiences. The data indicate that the result of combining complementary strengths can be an intentional integration of the wisdom of practice and academe. One implication is that future directions in both practice and research will require more bridges between higher education and nonprofit organizations. It follows, we suggest, that cross-professional teams, are one such effective bridging entity, because they embody different types of knowing and experience.

In sum, the data and analysis presented here indicates that practitioner-academic teams can "work" if there is a combination of interpersonal and structural features present. The analysis shows that it is not enough to have personal motivation and commitment, interpersonal trust, or willingness to share power and authority on the one hand. Nor is it enough to have certain structural dimensions, such as similar work experience, complementary strengths, previous acquaintance with teammates, or employment co-location, on the other hand.

Successful development and implementation of nonprofit management education can be fostered by teams that represent different kinds of knowing, for they speak to the new circumstances of nonprofit enterprise, both as a field of study and as an arena of practice. Successful development and implementation of teams themselves may well rest on considerations of the factors and conditions identified in this paper.

But it must also be borne in mind that the grants from the WKKF have funded the Building Bridges practitioner-academic partnerships, and assisted teams in overcoming several fundamental barriers to effective collaboration. The Bridges Initiative has contributed monetary and other resources, as well as legitimized--indeed promoted--the

team concept in implementing grant projects that bridge higher education and nonprofit organizations. It will be illuminating for future research to examine the effectiveness of practitioner-academic teams that operate without this unique blend of resources and guidelines.

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